



Wearable Artifacts

Written By: Gretchen Walker



TOOLS:

- [Flat-nosed pliers \(1\)](#)
- [Flex shaft \(1\)](#)
or Dremel tool with 79mm drill bit.
- [Hammer \(1\)](#)
- [Jeweler's saw \(1\)](#)
size 2/0 saw blades.
- [Metal block \(1\)](#)
or hard surface for hammering.
- [Metal shears \(1\)](#)
- [Small-toothed file \(1\)](#)
- [Soldering block \(1\)](#)
- [Third hand \(1\)](#)
flexible soldering clamp.
- [Tweezers \(1\)](#)
- [torch \(1\)](#)



PARTS:

- [Copper \(1\)](#)
20 gauge sheet and 16 gauge wire.
- [Circle template \(1\)](#)
- [Sharpie marker \(1\)](#)
- [Bees wax \(1\)](#)
or candle wax.
- [Abrasives \(1\)](#)
Scotch-Brite pads and 220-grit sandpaper.
- [Chopstick \(1\)](#)
with round shaft.
- [Cotton cord \(1\)](#)
for necklace.
- [Solder and flux \(1\)](#)
easy solder.
- [Patina solution \(1\)](#)
silver and black patina solution.
- [Paintbrush \(1\)](#)
- [Baking soda \(1\)](#)

SUMMARY

The jewelry I create is reminiscent of a more ancient time, like relics unearthed and altered with modern elements. The techniques described here let you create wearable art by texturizing metal with everyday objects found outside, at home, or in your work studio. All you need are basic soldering skills along with the materials listed at right and you're on your way to making wearable fossil art.

Step 1 — Texturize the metal sheet.



- There are many ways to impart texture to a sheet of virgin copper using items you may already have, such as large and small metal washers, a metal screen (I prefer bronze); wire (iron or brass); a sharp, long nail or hand-held engraver; or a piece of concrete or sidewalk.
- Place your copper sheet on a hard metal surface (metal block or anvil). Lay the objects directly onto the metal sheet, and then hammer for texturized effect. You'll want to practice by creating texture on sample pieces of metal sheet. If you have the option, anneal the sheet often, because as you continue to strike, it will temper (harden) the metal.

Step 2 — Cut out the pendant.



- The pendants shown here are round (although you can make them any shape you like). If you don't have a circle template, you can use the lids of vitamin or baby food containers, or even the bottom of a teacup.
- Once you've chosen a form for a template, use the Sharpie marker to trace the shape onto the texturized copper sheet, then cut it out with metal shears or a jeweler's saw. This takes a steady hand and patience.
- Be aware that if this is a first attempt with the jeweler's saw, you will want to have extra blades on hand. Using your flex shaft or Dremel tool, drill a hole along the inside perimeter of the design. Place a saw blade in the top clamp of your jeweler's saw, threading the blade through the hole in the sheet (design side up). Secure the blade in the bottom clamp of the saw.
- Brace the metal sheet against your bench pin by clamping your fingers against the top of the sheet and your thumb under the pin. If you do not have a bench pin, try using a brick on a tabletop.
- Make sure to wax your blade, as it eases the movement through the metal — you can use beeswax or candle wax. Following the design you've traced onto the metal, take your time, and try to keep your saw vertical (side-to-side motion will break the blade).

Step 3 — Make and attach the jump ring.



- Jump rings can be costly to purchase but are easy to make. First, find a chopstick that has a round shaft. Unroll 10" of the 16-gauge copper wire and anneal it to a glowing red. This will realign the molecules of the wire and make it more malleable. Take the copper wire and wrap it in a tight coil along the length of the chopstick. When the length is coiled, slide it off and begin sawing through one jump ring at a time. Using your flat-nosed pliers, select a jump ring and close the ends tightly together. Next, using your file, create a flat surface where the two ends of the jump ring meet. The pendant will also need to be filed where the jump ring will be attached.
- Set the pendant in your third hand and flux the soldering site as well as the jump ring. Apply a small piece of easy-flow solder onto the jump ring and flow the solder into the cracks using your torch. Quench and reapply the flux to the jump ring. It's important to have clean surfaces, otherwise the solder will not flow easily. Use your tweezers to hold the jump ring, evenly heat both surfaces, and solder the 2 pieces together.

Step 4 — Finish the piece.



- Finishing is important — it determines the overall mood of the piece. Make sure the pendant is oil- and dust-free, and then, using a paintbrush, apply a thin layer of silver-black solution to the entire surface. Silver black is an acid, so neutralize it afterwards in a bowl of water and baking soda (1 tablespoon baking soda per cup of water). Just dip it and then remove it. Using a Scotch-Brite pad or 220-grit sandpaper, buff away the black patina. Play around with the effect until you achieve the look you want. Thread the cord through the jump ring and enjoy!

Step 5 — Personalized stamp.



- Texturize metal with your own customized handmade stamp.
- Using your jeweler's saw, cut a large screw in half at the stem.
- File down the surface.
- Using your jeweler's saw cut out a small star (or any small shape you want) from a 16-gauge sheet of nickel or iron (iron lasts longer but is very difficult to cut).
- Solder the star onto the prepared surface.

This project first appeared in [CRAFT Volume 01](#), page 118-120.

This document was last generated on 2012-11-01 02:15:11 AM.